Demonstrating Evidence

Best Practices – 2019 AmeriCorps State and National Grant Competition
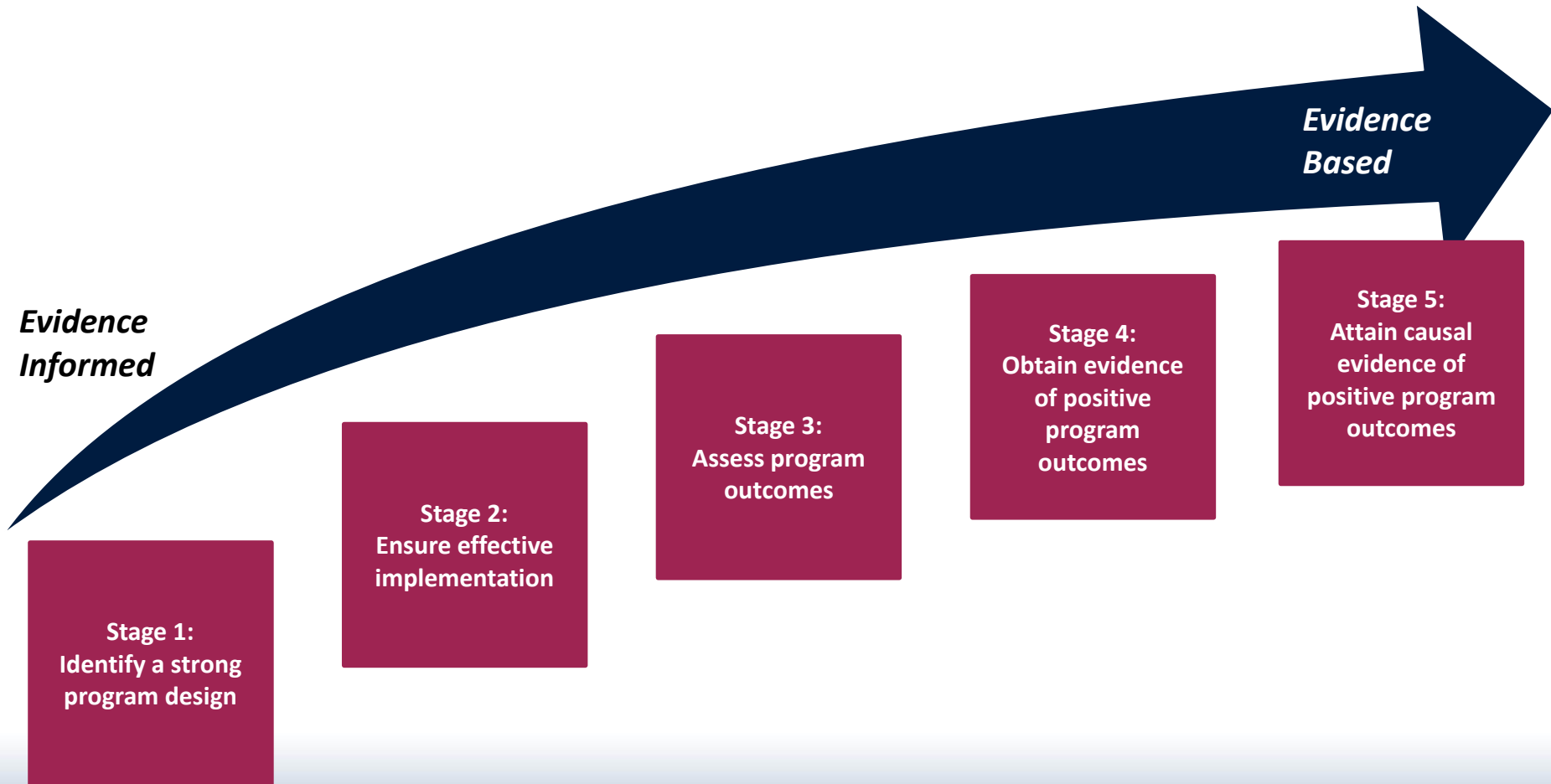
Topics

- CNCS' approach to evidence

- New criteria items in the evidence section

- Overview of NOFO evidence tiers

- Q&A

Why is Evidence Important?

- Achieve a shared goal of offering communities effective solutions that address their needs

- To inform continuous improvement of programs
  - Change what isn't working
  - Do more of what is working

- To test whether programs are effective, and what makes them effective

- To ensure that federal dollars are invested wisely

Building Evidence of Effectiveness

Evidence Based

Evidence Informed

Stage 5:
Attain causal evidence of positive program outcomes

Stage 4:
Obtain evidence of positive program outcomes

Stage 3:
Assess program outcomes

Stage 2:
Ensure effective implementation

Stage 1:
Identify a strong program design

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Clarifying Program Design

- Core components of the intervention should be <u>clearly</u> described in the application:
  - Characteristics of the beneficiary population
  - Characteristics of population delivering the intervention
  - Dosage and design of the intervention
  - Setting in which the intervention is delivered
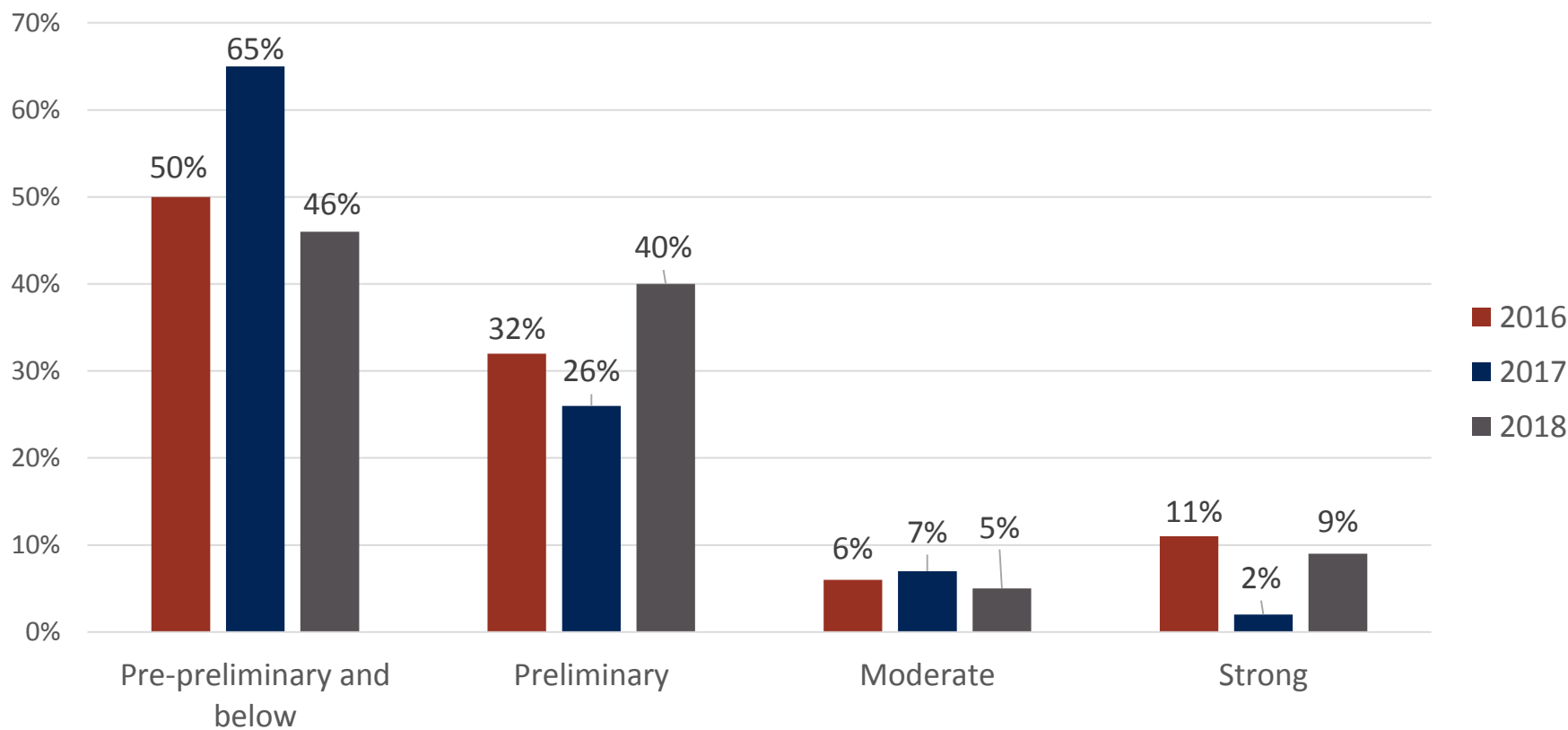 - Outcomes of the intervention

2019 NOFO

Evidence Base (16 points)

- Evidence Tiers (8 points – p. 14)
  - Understanding the level and strength of the evidence base of the intervention relative to its intended outcomes as identified in the logic model.

- Evidence Quality (8 points – p. 15)
  - Quality assessment is tied to the evidence tiers
    - Preliminary, Moderate & Strong
    - Pre-preliminary

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Evidence Tiers: Funded Applicants

Source: GARP Evidence Data from 2018 Competition

2019 Evidence Tiers

- Pre-Preliminary
- Preliminary
- Moderate
- Strong

Evidence Tiers: Pre-preliminary

1. Applicant has <u>not</u> submitted an outcome/impact evaluation of the intervention described in the application.

2. Applicant may have collected some performance data.

3. Applicant <u>must describe</u> how program design is **evidence-informed.**

4. Applicants may cite prior performance measure data.

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Evidence Tier "Pre-preliminary" Example

In 2017, Applicant's *Ready to Read* program provided tutoring services to 500 students and 452 completed the required dosage of 30 minutes, twice a week for 6 months. The program is **adapted from** Famous Mentoring Program's successful approach. A 2015 randomized control trial found that, in one year, students in Famous Mentoring Program increased their scores on standardized tests by the equivalent of 1.5 grade levels on the Famous Standardized Literacy Assessment.

Evidence Tiers: Preliminary

1. Applicant has submitted up to two **outcome evaluation reports** (can be internal or external evaluations);

2. The reports evaluated the **same intervention** described in the application;

3. Yielded **positive results** on one or more key desired outcomes.

Evidence Tiers: Preliminary (Cont.)

4. Study design must include:

   o Pre- and post-assessments without a comparison group; or

   o Post-assessment comparison between intervention & comparison group(s).

   o If a retrospective pre-post assessment is being considered, a justification must be provided in the narrative.

5. CNCS grantees recompeting for the third competitive cycle should submit an evaluation report of their CNCS-funded program.

   o Can be one of the two required reports, or a third document. All submitted reports will count towards the evidence review.

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Evidence Tier "Preliminary" Example

In 2017, Applicant's Ready to Read program provided tutoring services to 500 students and 452 completed the required dosage of 30 minutes, twice a week for 6 months. Based on a pre- and post-assessment at one of its 14 sites, 350 students gained at least 1.5 grade levels on the Famous Standardized Literacy Assessment. The evaluation was conducted internally. The effect sizes were significant and represent a positive result.

Additional Documents: The applicant submitted an internal evaluation report of their Ready to Read program.

Evidence Tiers: Moderate

1. Should submit up to two reports from **well-designed and well-implemented** evaluation studies (conducted by an independent **external entity**).

2. Evaluation reports submitted as additional documents should have examined the same intervention described in the application.

3. **Evidence of effectiveness** (positive findings) on key desired outcomes is via:

   – **RCT/QED** with **matched comparison/treatment groups**.

Evidence Tiers: Moderate (Cont.)

4. Ability to generalize may be **limited** (e.g., single-site)

5. CNCS grantees recompeting for the third competitive cycle should submit an evaluation report of their CNCS-funded program.

   o Can be one of the two required reports, or a third document.

   o All submitted reports will count towards the evidence review.

Evidence Tier "Moderate" Example

The applicant's *Ready to Read* program **replicates** the Famous Mentoring Program's successful approach. Based on a 2017 quasi-experimental evaluation at one of Famous Mentoring Program's fourteen sites, students gained on average 1.5 grade levels on the Famous Standardized Literacy Assessment. The study was conducted by an independent (external) evaluator. Students in the program outperformed students in the matched comparison group on reading comprehension. The effect size was moderate.

Additional Documents: The applicant submitted one external evaluation report of Famous Mentoring Program, which the Ready to Read program is replicating.

Evidence Tiers: Strong

1. Should submit up to two reports from **well-designed and well-implemented** evaluation studies (conducted by an independent **external entity**).

2. **Evidence of effectiveness** (positive findings) on key desired outcomes is via:

   – **RCT/QED** with **matched comparison/treatment groups**.

3. Submitted studies should have evaluated the same intervention described in the application, and tested

   a) nationally/regionally/state-level (**multi-site study**)

   b) in different locations or different populations within local area

Evidence Tiers: Strong (Cont.)

4. Ability to establish **causal attribution** and generalize **beyond the study context**.

5. CNCS grantees recompeting for the third competitive cycle should submit an evaluation report of their CNCS-funded program.

   o Can be one of the two required reports, or a third document.

   o All submitted reports will count towards the evidence review.

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Evidence Tier "Strong" Example

In 2015, Applicant E's Ready to Read provided tutoring services to 5000 students. Based on a randomized control trial at all twenty-five sites statewide, 3500 students gained at least 1.5 grade levels on the Famous Standardized Literacy Assessment. The study was conducted by an independent (external) evaluator. By the end of the year, students **in all sites** in the Ready to Read program outperformed students in the control group on all literacy skills addressed by the program. The effect sizes were not only significant but **substantial in magnitude**. The Ready to Read program was found **effective regardless** of gender, race/ethnicity, or dual language learner status and **across multiple sites and site types**.

Additional Documents: The applicant submitted an external evaluation report of their Ready to Read program.

Data Collection and Evaluation Plans

Additional evaluation-related items that should be submitted:

Additional Required Documents	Who Submits	Scored
Data Collection Plan	New Applicants	No
Evaluation Plan	Applicants recompeting for 2nd+ cycle	No
Evaluation Report	Applicants recompeting for 3rd+ cycle	Yes

- Documents required for submission differ based on an applicant's funding cycle.

Tips for Applicants

- **Read the Notice carefully**.

- Describe clearly the <u>body of evidence</u> that exists for your program:
  - Summarize the study design and key findings from submitted reports.
  - Describe other supporting evidence, for example, past performance measure data or other research.

- **Even if you submit studies, describe them in the narrative**. The narrative and documents will be reviewed by different reviewers.

- Present high quality evidence from the two strongest, most relevant studies.

- Do <u>not</u> submit more than the allowable number of studies.

- Remember to allocate space in the narrative that addresses all of the criteria that will be scored.

Submitting Documents

- Who should submit documents?
  - In order to be considered for Preliminary, Moderate or Strong evidence → Submit up to 2 studies
  - Any applicant required to submit an evaluation report to meet evaluation requirements → Submit report

- If required, evaluation report can be submitted *in addition* to the "up to 2 studies".

- Submit additional documents only if the intervention in the application is the same as the intervention in the evaluation reports.

Resources

- AmeriCorps State and National Grants FY2019

  – https://www.nationalservice.gov/build-your-capacity/grants/funding-opportunities/2019/americorps-state-and-national-grants-fy-2019

- Evaluation Resources on the Knowledge Network:

  – http://www.nationalservice.gov/resources/evaluation

- Evidence Exchange

  – https://www.nationalservice.gov/impact-our-nation/evidence-exchange

Thank you!

Questions?